



RIDING *as* a REASON

Jim Rosenberg, with the American Legion Riders, uses his love of motorcycles to connect with and support veterans.

BY HEATHER FEELER
PHOTOS BY ANTHONY JINSON

Bikers often get a bad rap. This especially rings true when bikers are lumped with the fictional dramas on TV, which include big guns, loud bikes and lethal men outfitted in leather. Although those shows get big ratings, they also misrepresent a unique troupe of bikers whose sole mission is to help others.

The American Legion Riders is made up of local motorcycle enthusiasts with a mission to help veterans in our community. To be a member you must be a veteran, family member and own a legal motorcycle. The Legion Riders local charter in Jefferson City is the largest group in Missouri with 114 members, but there are more than 800 Legion Riders across the state dedicated to the cause.

“Everything we do, we do for the veterans,” says Jim Rosenberg, who is a Legion Riders member and holds several leadership positions at the local and statewide level of American Legion. “I do serve in a lot of different roles, which takes a lot of my time, but I do it all for the veterans and the look in their eyes when I help them.”

The Legion Riders visit veterans in local nursing homes and hospitals, fundraise year-round to help with expenses for veterans in need and are a part of the big events that honor veterans such as the annual Honor Flights. The Legion Riders participate in every Honor Flight by greeting the bus in Kingdom City, Missouri, with hundreds of motorcycles and riding with them into Columbia. It is something that touches Rosenberg every time he rides.

“I’ve never talked to a veteran on one of those Honor Flights when they haven’t cried and been so thankful,” Rosenberg says. “We owe veterans such a debt of gratitude, more than we can ever repay.”

VETERANS HAVE A SPECIAL place in Rosenberg’s heart. He grew up as an Army brat having started kindergarten in Germany and finished high school in Michigan. His father was a four-time Vietnam veteran and eventually died from the effects of Agent Orange. Rosenberg came to Missouri when he joined the Army and then stayed put the past 25







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years while driving trucks and raising his family. His dedication to helping others has rubbed off on his family as well. His wife is an Auxiliary Legion member and Legion Rider, and his son is active in the Sons of American Legion.

Others have noticed all of this time spent helping veterans through the Legion Riders and his multiple leadership roles within the Legion. Rosenberg received the Rider of the Year for 2014, which is a top award given to a Legion Rider who has contributed the most in a given year to Legion activities. He was presented the award this past March at the American Legion Post 5 in Jefferson City.

“It’s humbling to get this award because I don’t think I’m more deserving than someone else,” Rosenberg says. “I don’t do it for the recognition. I do it all for the veterans.”

It’s exactly that humble spirit and the steadfast behind-the-scenes work that make Rosenberg a natural leader. As state ride captain, he is currently planning a three-day ride June 26 to 28, covering 850 miles that starts at Post 21 in Independence, Missouri, and ends at Post 5 in Jefferson City. The proceeds from this legacy ride will fund scholarships for children of fallen heroes from 9/11. Coordinating rides with other chapters around the state is one Rosenberg’s favorite roles.

“We are all brothers and sisters,” he says. “It’s nice to be somewhere and get to know other people who have been through the same things you’ve been through.”

ROSENBERG NOTES THE importance of veterans plugging into a community of other veterans so their voices can be heard. He strongly recommends joining a local Legion where you can find a group with shared passions, perhaps even an interest in riding the open road to raise money for a great cause.

For more information on the Legion Riders or American Legion Post 5, stop by Post 5 at 4123 Tanner Bridge Road in Jefferson City, or visit legion.org. **JC**

J Pfennys